

UK aid to Ukraine

Approach summary paper

December 2023

The Independent Commission for Aid Impact works to improve the quality of UK development assistance through robust, independent scrutiny. We provide assurance to the UK taxpayer by conducting independent reviews of the effectiveness and value for money of UK aid.

We operate independently of government, reporting to Parliament, and our mandate covers all UK official development assistance.



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1. Background, purpose and scope

Background

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, escalating into full-scale war an eight-year conflict that had previously involved the annexation of Crimea by Russia and protracted fighting by Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. The 2022 invasion created a major geopolitical crisis, as well as a humanitarian catastrophe, with 6.2 million people internally displaced and 7.7 million registered as refugees across Europe. In 2022, the international community raised \$3.8 billion for humanitarian support within Ukraine, and in 2023 the UN has appealed for a further \$3.9 billion to support 11 million people.¹

The UK has made support for Ukraine its top foreign policy priority for 2023. As well as political and military support, the UK provided £311 million in official development assistance (ODA) in 2022 – an 11-fold increase from 2021 – and from 2023 Ukraine is set to become the largest recipient of UK bilateral aid.²

Purpose

UK aid to Ukraine is a matter of considerable public interest. Opinion polls show strong public support for continuing UK support for Ukraine,³ and the Disasters Emergency Committee, a coalition of international humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), received over £420 million in donations from the UK public, UK government (as aid match funding) and businesses in response to its Ukraine appeal.⁴ There is also considerable parliamentary interest. The International Development Committee held a hearing in November 2022 into whether UK aid to Ukraine was reaching those who need it most.⁵ The Foreign Affairs Committee has an open enquiry into the situation in Ukraine and the UK's response.⁶

This rapid review will be the first independent scrutiny of UK aid to Ukraine since the February 2022 invasion. It will draw on learning from ICAI's recent country portfolio review of Afghanistan,⁷ which examined risks associated with large-scale reconstruction efforts, and will build on past ICAI reviews of the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative,⁸ the UK's approach to peacebuilding,⁹ and the management of fraud and corruption risks in bilateral and multilateral aid programming.¹⁰ A key issue for the review will be how well the UK is managing corruption risks in Ukraine.

The purpose will be to conduct a strategic review of UK ODA support for Ukraine, in the context of wider UK and international support and engagement, to assess whether the country portfolio is suitable for supporting the UK's strategic objectives.

Scope

The review will explore the full range of UK aid to Ukraine since the February 2022 Russian invasion. It will also consider aid provided before February 2022, where this provides a foundation for current activities. Support for Ukrainian refugees outside the country will not be in scope, nor will the UK's response to the wider global consequences of the Ukraine war, such as disruption to global food markets.

The review will examine the policies and strategies guiding UK aid to Ukraine, and will analyse programme designs, choice of delivery methods and emerging results. It will cover the UK's humanitarian support, assessing whether it is reaching the most vulnerable and whether it aligns with international humanitarian principles. It will include UK financial support for the civilian functions of the Ukrainian government, including

1 *Humanitarian Response Plan: Ukraine*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, February 2023, [link](#).

2 *Annual report and accounts 2022-23*, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, July 2023, pp. 267-272, [link](#).

3 "One year on, how high is support for Ukraine in Britain?", YouGov, 24 February 2023, [link](#).

4 Disasters Emergency Committee website Ukraine page: [link](#).

5 *Ukraine: Is UK aid reaching those who need it most?*, UK Parliament Committees website, 25 November 2022, [link](#).

6 UK Parliament website: [link](#).

7 *UK aid to Afghanistan: Country portfolio review*, ICAI, November 2022, [link](#).

8 *The UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative*, ICAI, January 2020, [link](#).

9 *The UK's approaches to peacebuilding*, ICAI, December 2022, [link](#).

10 *Tackling fraud in UK aid: A rapid review*, ICAI, April 2021, [link](#); *Tackling fraud in UK aid through multilateral organisations: A rapid review*, ICAI, March 2022, [link](#).

UK support via the World Bank, and associated mitigation of corruption-related risks. It will cover UK programmes intended to help strengthen governance capacity, tackle sexual violence in conflict, promote international legal accountability and build capacities for peace.

The review will also assess the UK’s contribution to mobilising international public and private finance for Ukraine, improving coordination among international development partners, and preparing for the reconstruction and recovery phase – including a capital contribution via British Investment International (BII) announced at the June 2023 Ukraine Reconstruction Conference in London.¹¹

This will be a rapid review. It will reach evaluative judgments and make recommendations, but will not score the UK’s response. While there will be no fieldwork within Ukraine, the review will engage with Ukrainian stakeholders through online interviews and focus groups.

2. Review questions

The review will be built around the evaluation criteria of **relevance**, **effectiveness** and **coherence**.¹² It will address the following questions and sub-questions.

Table 1: Our review questions

Review criteria and questions	Sub-questions
Relevance: Is UK aid to Ukraine guided by a clear strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does UK aid to Ukraine reflect the UK’s strategic objectives and Ukraine’s needs and priorities? • How well does UK aid respond to the needs of vulnerable people in Ukraine, including women and girls, and reflect international humanitarian principles? • To what extent is the UK response guided by learning from past crises?
Effectiveness: How well is UK aid to Ukraine being delivered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well did the UK mobilise a rapid aid response following the February 2022 invasion? • How suitable are the UK’s choices of aid instruments and delivery channels, and how well does the UK government manage corruption risks? • How well is the UK aid portfolio contributing to developing national leadership and capacity?
Coherence: How well has the UK used its funding and influencing to promote coherent international aid support for Ukraine?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well has the UK supported the mobilisation and coordination of international aid for Ukraine? • How well does the UK work with Ukrainian partners, other bilateral partners and multilateral partners?

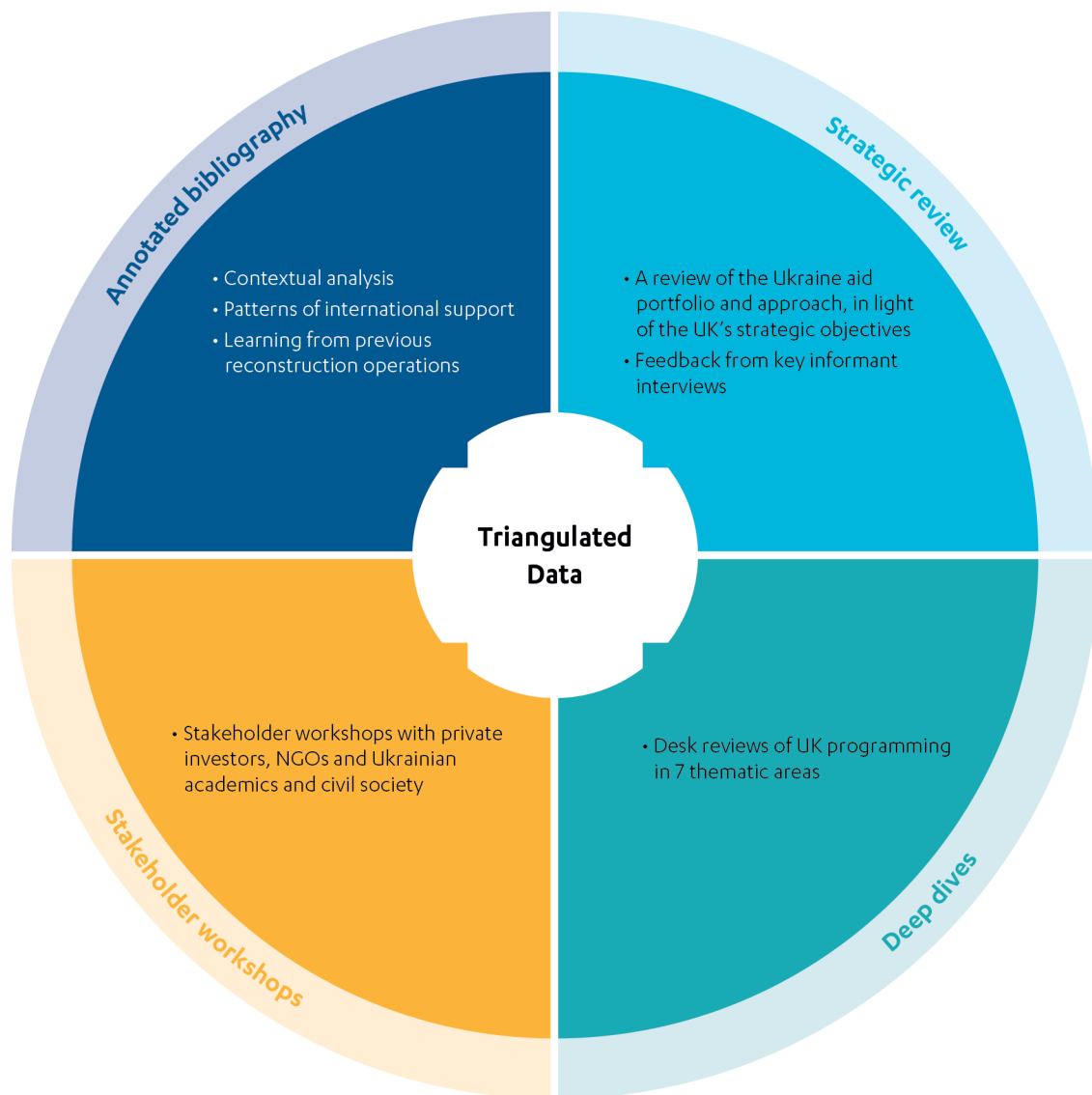
¹¹ “British International Investment to support reconstruction in Ukraine”, BII news story, 21 June 2023, [link](#).

¹² Based on the OECD DAC evaluation criteria. See *Principles for evaluation of development assistance*, Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1991, [link](#).

3. Methodology

The methodology is built around four components that combine to support robust conclusions.

Figure 1: Methodology wheel



- **Strategic review:** Using a combination of document review and key informant interviews, we will assess the UK's overall strategy for providing aid to Ukraine. We will examine how well the Ukraine country portfolio supports the UK's strategic objectives and the key causal mechanisms it relies on.
- **Deep dives:** We will conduct desk reviews of the UK's approach to seven thematic objectives within its Ukraine country strategy: humanitarian assistance, fiscal support, anti-corruption, economic and business environment reform, stabilisation, rights and accountability, and mobilising investment for Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery. The deep dives will assess the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of programming supporting each objective. They will examine the choice of delivery channels (including management of corruption-related risks), the UK's speed and flexibility in response to the invasion and subsequent events, and the quality of its partnerships with Ukrainian institutions and other development partners. They will also look at how well programmes reflect the UK's commitment to supporting women and girls and to reaching the most vulnerable.
- **Annotated bibliography:** This will summarise available data and analysis on the Ukrainian context, including patterns of humanitarian need and the humanitarian response, the extent of war damage, the Women,

Peace and Security agenda, international accountability mechanisms for war crimes, and relevant Ukraine government policies, strategies and institutions. The annotated bibliography will also provide a brief summary of relevant learning from past crises.

- **Stakeholder workshops:** We will undertake three workshops with key stakeholders and experts among the private sector, NGOs and Ukrainian academics.

4. Limitations

This is a strategic review focused on how well the country portfolio has been designed to support the UK’s strategic objectives. It has limited capacity to assess the quality of delivery and emerging results, given the early stage of implementation of many activities, limited availability of data, and difficulties in attributing impacts to UK support, in view of the dynamic context and the scale of other international support.

5. Risk management

Table 2: Risks and mitigations

Risk	Mitigation and management actions
High pressure on UK government teams reduces access provided to information and contacts.	We will ensure a constructive and collaborative relationship with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office officials managing the review.
Difficulty in accessing review material due to its sensitive nature.	We will obtain appropriate security clearance for team members. Appropriate information security measures will be put in place for handling sensitive documents and data.
Wide scope of review to be covered in a relatively short timeline.	The methodology is focused on delivering robust findings within achievable parameters. The team includes experts with knowledge of the country context, to facilitate rapid evidence collection and analysis.
Sensitivity of the topic makes access to Ukraine-based stakeholders difficult, or makes them reluctant to offer a critical assessment of UK aid.	The team is in a position to access key stakeholders in Ukraine directly. The team will engage with a range of Ukrainian stakeholders (government officials, civil society, Ukrainian academics in the UK).

6. Quality assurance

The review will be carried out under the guidance of ICAI Lead Commissioner Sir Hugh Bayley, with support from the ICAI secretariat. The review will be subject to quality assurance by the service provider consortium. Both the methodology and the final report will be peer-reviewed by Professor Dominik Zaum from the University of Reading.

7. Timing and deliverables

The review will take place over a seven-month period, starting from October 2023, with publication planned for April 2024.

Table 3: Estimated timing and deliverables

Phase	Timing and deliverables
Inception	Approach paper: December 2023
Data collection	Evidence pack: December 2023 Emerging findings presentation: January 2024
Reporting	Final report: April 2024



This document can be downloaded from www.icaei.independent.gov.uk.

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